

**Testimony before the Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement  
H.B. 6403 An Act Requiring Legislative Approval for the Merger or Closing of Institutions within the  
Connecticut State Colleges and Universities.**

**Submitted by Kathleen Herron, Professor of Mathematics  
Capital Community College**

March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Dear Senator Haskell, Representative Elliott, Senator Witkos, Representative Haines and members of the committee,

My name is Kathleen Herron and I am a Professor of Mathematics at Capital Community College. My job and vocation for the past 27 years has been to assist Capital students in learning the mathematics that is required for their job and/or an associate degree. I enjoy working with students in our Capitol city-I love the diversity of our student body and am awed by the motivation and dedication our students have towards their education. Given the low socio-economic backgrounds and poor K-12 educational experience that many of our students come with, it is very challenging for them to succeed in college. At Capital we offer developmental math and English courses for those students who are not prepared to take college-level courses and we offer many supports such as tutoring, educational software, mentoring and advising. In addition to our many degree program offerings, Capital offers students a robust non-academic environment by bringing Hartford into the college and by bringing the college community into Hartford. For many years we have encouraged students to take in the culture that Hartford offers, including discounted tickets to plays, concerts, lectures and historical sights.

I am writing to you today to offer strong support for H.B. 6403 since I am very concerned about the Students First plan. I am concerned that major changes such as the elimination of developmental Math and English courses will no longer allow students who are not yet ready for college courses to succeed at Capital. Removing developmental education will not improve our success rate, which has been criticized recently, but only decrease our rates since students will be placed into college level courses automatically. For many students, community colleges are their only option for college, given the close proximity to their homes and the lower costs compared with four-year colleges. I am also concerned that if the 12 community colleges are merged into 1 college we will lose the “community” that makes each college unique.

As you may know, the costs for the system office of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities have risen incredibly over the past 4-5 years. Since 2016 the budget for the CSCU system office has increased by 90% while the community college expenses have increased by 4%. More and more money is being spent on administration costs while the true financial need is at the community colleges.

I am not alone in my opposition to the Students First plan. Over 1400 faculty, staff, students and past presidents have signed a petition to stop this consolidation plan. 10 out of 12 community

college Senates have approved a vote of no confidence in the Board of Regents due to serious concerns of Students First.

Connecticut's community colleges educate the most students of any state institution and the proposed merger of all 12 colleges into 1 is a big deal. I believe it is critical that this proposal require legislative approval by the Connecticut General Assembly. I hope that you will approve this bill so that if the merger is approved it is done with oversight by our legislators.

Thank you for this listening to my concerns about Connecticut's Community Colleges.